



# Australian Bureau of Statistics

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### About this newsletter

Local Government and ABS is a quarterly newsletter created by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) aimed at helping the Local Government Sector use statistics to assist with planning and other community servicing decisions.

The specific aims of this newsletter are to:

- Help you easily find information on the ABS website and explain the structure of the ABS website;
- Provide direct electronic links to statistical series of use to local government. Electronic links are coloured and underlined and can be activated using the mouse button;
- Explain statistical terms to help make sense of more complex data;
- Provide a central contact point where you can provide your views and suggestions as to how the ABS can better assist local government.

This is a free newsletter and we encourage you to forward it to others and post it on your bulletin board. Anyone is welcome to receive Local Government and ABS.

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To find this newsletter on the ABS Website:

- Select **News and Media** from the main menu at the top or bottom of the screen.
- At the next page choose **ABS Newsletters**.
- Then choose the appropriate edition under **Local Government and ABS**.

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### A new small area geography - Mesh Blocks

The ABS has developed the Mesh Block, a new geographical unit that will fundamentally change the way statistics are used in Australia. The Mesh Block is intended to become the basic building block of all

statistical, political and administrative geography in Australia. This will enable data to be compared across collections, across subject matter and across organisations.

Mesh Blocks in general contain between 30 and 60 households and are about one fifth the size of the smallest geographic unit currently in use, the Census Collection District (CD).

The criteria for designing and building Mesh Blocks were first defined by a panel of experts in 2003 and were refined and amended in response to public comments.

The ABS has recently released Draft Mesh Block boundaries. There is:

- a CD-ROM containing the boundaries : Mesh Blocks (Draft) Digital Boundaries, Australia); (Cat. 1209.0.30.001) and
- an associated Information Paper : Draft Mesh Blocks, Australia (Cat. 1209.0.55.001)

Both the Information Paper and the CD-ROM are available for free.

Every attempt was made to create Mesh Blocks true to the design criteria. This relied upon advances made in the last decade in GIS technology and digital topographic data. However, even the best national spatial databases will not be completely up to date with human activity in rapidly developing parts of Australia. Some Draft Mesh Blocks will inevitably have been created based on topographical features which no longer exist or will not have allowed for major new features.

The ABS is seeking comments on the Draft Mesh Blocks from local authorities and other statistical and spatial data users who may have knowledge of local conditions that was not available to the ABS during the design process.

Feedback on the draft boundaries for Mesh Blocks will be an important input to the long-term use and stability of Mesh Blocks. It is intended to incorporate this feedback in the Mesh Blocks that will be used for the first time for the 2006 Population Census.

Responses to the draft boundaries should reach ABS prior to 31 December 2005.

For further information contact Michael Toole by phone on (02) 6252 7759 or by email : **m.toole@abs.gov.au**

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## **2006 Population Census - have your say on proposed products and services**

The ABS has recently released its plans for the products and services it plans to produce following the 2006 Census. Details of the plans can be found in the information paper 2006 Census of Population and Housing - Proposed Products and Services (cat. no. 2011.0). The publication also calls for public comment on the proposals.

Users of Census data and the general public are invited to complete a questionnaire to contribute their views. The information paper and questionnaire are available from 2006 Population Census - have your say. Submissions are sought by November 11.

The ABS will also be conducting consultation sessions about the proposals with users of Census data and other interested parties in each state and territory during October.

The user consultation process plays a significant role in the development of the 2006 Census output program by ensuring that Census products are relevant and responsive to the needs of users.

If you are interested in attending one of the User Consultation sessions, send your contact details to [marketing@abs.gov.au](mailto:marketing@abs.gov.au) to be informed of your nearest session.

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## **What is the age and sex structure of the population in your area?**

The ABS has recently released information about the age and sex structure of the estimated resident population, at 30 June 2004, for small areas including Statistical Divisions (SD), Statistical Local Areas (SLA) and Local Government Areas (LGA).

The data is available for free as a series of data cubes - 1 for all SLAs and LGAs in Australia, and separate data cubes for SLAs and LGAs in each state/territory. These are available from : **Population by Age and Sex, Australia and States, 2004** (3235.0.55.001)

In addition to 2004, data cubes are available for 2003, 2002, 2001, 2000, 1996 and 1991.

The key points of the 2004 data include:

- In 2004, the Sydney SD contained 21.0% of Australia's population. Brisbane was the fastest growing capital city SD with an increase between 2003 and 2004 of 2.3% (39,700 persons).
- The median age, the age at which half the population is older and half is younger was 36.4 years in 2004. Amongst the SDs in Australia, the highest median age was recorded in Yorke and Lower North in SA (44.5 years) and Mid-North Coast in NSW (42.4 years). The SDs with the lowest median ages were Northern Territory - Bal in NT (28.4 years) and Kimberley in WA (29.4 years).
- In 2004, children aged 0 to 14 years comprised 19.8% of Australia's population. The SD with the highest proportion of its population aged under 15 in 2004 was Northern Territory - Bal in NT (28.4%) and the lowest was Adelaide (17.9%).
- In 2004, 13.0% of Australia's population was aged 65 years and over. The SD with the highest proportion in this age group was Yorke and Lower North in SA (20.3%) and the lowest proportion was Pilbara in WA (2.5%).
- In 2004, the sex ratio (number of males per 100 females) for Australia was 98.8. The SDs with the lowest sex ratio were Greater Hobart in Tas (95.5), Adelaide in SA (96.4) and Central Highlands in Vic (96.6). The highest sex ratios were Pilbara in WA (123.0), Australian Capital Territory -Bal in ACT (122.5) and North West in Qld (117.0).

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## Sources of personal income in regional Australia

The second in a series of reports analysing a range of topics with a particular focus on regional Australia was released on the 12th of August and is available to download free of charge.

This issue focusses on the distribution of personal income across regions within each state and territory. It is:

Perspectives on Regional Australia: Sources of Income, Experimental Estimates, 2000-01(cat. no. 1380.0.55.002)

In this publication, Local Government Areas (LGAs) across Australia, and Statistical Subdivisions (SSDs) in the case of the Australian Capital Territory, are discussed, highlighting regions with the highest proportion of personal income from each of four different sources – investment, own unincorporated business, superannuation and annuities and government cash benefits.

Findings include that in the 2000-01 financial year:

- Woollahra (A) had the highest proportion of income from investment of the New South Wales LGAs.
- In Victoria, the LGA of West Wimmera (S) had the highest proportion of income from own unincorporated business.
- The District Council of Peterborough had the highest proportion of income from superannuation and annuities in South Australia.
- In Tasmania, Break O'Day (M) had the highest proportion of income from government cash benefits.
- The proportion of personal income from investment was typically higher in the metropolitan regions of Australia.
- The regions with the highest proportion of income from own unincorporated business were typically non-metropolitan.

- In the larger states, New South Wales and Victoria, the non-metropolitan regions had a higher proportion of income from superannuation and annuities, whereas in most other states and territories the metropolitan regions had the highest proportion of income from this source.
- Non-metropolitan areas typically had the highest proportions of income from government cash benefits.

For further information please contact Kirsten Hastwell by phone on (08) 82377369 or by email : [kirsten.hastwell@abs.gov.au](mailto:kirsten.hastwell@abs.gov.au)

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## Major new report on Indigenous health and welfare

The ABS has released a new report that draws on a wide range of data to paint a picture of Indigenous health and welfare, and related social circumstances. Data is presented at the national and state level, and by remoteness, providing a valuable context for people involved in Indigenous health and welfare policy.

The report *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (4704.0)* is available in electronic and print versions - 312 pages. The electronic version is free; \$65.00 for the hard copy publication.

The main features are also available for free.

Among the topics covered are:

- education and housing circumstances;
- mothers and children;
- mortality;
- health status and disability;
- health risk factors; and
- access to, and use of, services.

This publication includes the results of national censuses and surveys, as well as information held in the administrative datasets of various government departments and national statistical collection agencies.

Released biennially, this publication is a joint venture between the ABS and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

Do you need to know more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander statistics? Then visit our Indigenous Statistics theme page.

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## What's happening in Local Government Finance?

### Collections

During the September quarter, electronic forms for the **annual** data collection, conducted cooperatively by the ABS and the Department of Local Government (DLG) and/or Local Government Grants Commission (GC) in each state and Northern Territory, were despatched for a number of jurisdictions. Forms for councils in the remaining jurisdictions are soon to follow. Each year changes to the collection instrument are kept to a minimum. This year special efforts have been made to align questions on the form with available items from councils' financial statements. Return dates differ between jurisdictions, with some seeking information as early as mid-October and others due by the end of November. Returning forms earlier than the due date will greatly assist both the DLG/GC and the ABS to achieve their data processing schedules.

The ABS also conducts a **quarterly** survey of financial information which was despatched to selected councils in the third week of September. Two changes have been made to the form which will improve reporting by councils and which will enhance the data provided to the National Accounts. The first change relates to the addition of Utilities in the revenue sheet. This will avoid any confusion of where this data should be reported. The second change is the inclusion of 'Assets acquired below cost' in the revenue sheet and 'Assets donated' in the expenses sheet. This will allow the ABS to provide better estimates of Gross Fixed Capital Formation and Net Savings aggregates in the Quarterly National Accounts.

Responses to the quarterly survey are required by **11 October 2005**. Early attention to getting the forms to the ABS will ensure that the financial activity of local government is accurately represented in Australia's National Accounts.

## **Other Developments**

Murray Lyons from the Local Government Statistics Unit retired from the ABS on 29 July 2005 after a career spanning over 27 years in the ABS. Murray's attention to detail and analytical ability have been valuable assets to the ABS and the quality of his work has been acknowledged by both external and internal clients. His statistical knowledge and accuracy have made him an important and reliable member of the Government Finance Statistics program. Murray's expertise and willingness to lend assistance will be missed by his colleagues.

On 26 September 2005, ABS Queensland commenced work in new premises located at the Newstead end of Fortitude Valley in Brisbane. With an expected shortage of prime office sites in the CBD over the next decade, the ABS opted for a 'near city' precinct. Citygate is a brand new building with its 3 floors exclusively fitted out for the ABS.

## **Contacts**

Director: Sean Thompson [sean.thompson@abs.gov.au] (07) 3222 6257

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## **Links to previous issues of Local Government and ABS**

**Local Government and ABS Issue 10 June 2005**  
**Local Government and ABS Issue 9 March 2005**  
**Local Government and ABS Issue 8 December 2004**  
**Local Government and ABS Issue 7 September 2004**  
**Local Government and ABS Issue 6 June 2004**  
**Local Government and ABS Issue 5 March 2004**  
**Local Government and ABS Issue 4 December 2003**  
**Local Government and ABS Issue 3 September 2003**  
**Local Government and ABS Issue 2 June 2003**  
**Local Government and ABS Issue 1 March 2003**

## **Newsletter contact details**

This newsletter is one way to help improve communication between the ABS and the Local Government Sector. New ABS initiatives to assist local government organisations will be announced in this newsletter as they evolve. We would like your views and suggestions about this newsletter so that it remains useful and assists you to understand and use ABS statistics. Please email comments to [rex.porter@abs.gov.au](mailto:rex.porter@abs.gov.au), or by telephone on (08) 8237 7416.

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